

## **Presidential Migratory Bird Federal Stewardship Award Nomination**

### **Department of Energy: Pantex Plant Migratory Bird Program**

The Department of Energy/National Nuclear Security Administration's Pantex Plant and co-applicant initiated, and continue to build, a migratory bird program at the Pantex Plant located in the Texas Panhandle. The components of this program include research, management, and outreach, and represent a significant pattern and effort for defining a migratory bird program and elevating it to a level beyond agency mandates. Program accomplishments represent a renewed site leadership commitment in the realm of migratory bird conservation. The work demonstrates the Pantex Plant's initiative and credibility pertaining to the conservation of migratory birds and habitat. The research and protection projects are the result of program initiatives and are in the forefront of regional conservation efforts.



#### **Research**

Migratory bird research has included work on purple martins, effects of wind turbines on migratory birds, and on burrowing owls and other birds that utilize prairie dog colonies. Findings have been incorporated into management plans, specifically, the pretreatment surveys for wintering and nesting owls prior to control of prairie dog towns as prescribed in the Management Plan for Prairie Dogs and Western Burrowing Owls. Since 2001, approximately 9,000 nestling purple martins have been banded, furthering the information base on the western periphery of their range. Finally, a comprehensive literature review of the impacts of wind energy on wildlife has been developed and shared with Federal and state natural resource agencies, including the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services's Region Two Office.

#### **Management**

A significant accomplishment under the NEPA review process involved the installation of raptor protection on new utility poles at the Pantex Plant. In 2008, protective devices were installed on approximately 500 new electric poles. The devices, which are made of plastic, provide a perch of protective insulation on one of two closely situated electric lines on the new poles. Approximately 20 miles of lines now have these protective devices. To ensure that any grassland or habitat restoration truly qualifies as prairie restoration for maximum benefit to grassland migratory birds, grass seeding procedures were reviewed and revised in 2008. Now, when grasses are planted, the Plant's native prairie restoration program uses appropriate prairie seeding mixtures for the specific soil type at the site.

## **Outreach**

The Pantex Plant's migratory bird program has achieved considerable success in providing important and interesting communication to various groups on and off the Plant site through presentations, publications, driving tours, and interviews. Technical guidance is commonly provided to Pantex employees in response to questions pertaining to migratory birds. Presentations have been provided to outside organizations such as church, civic, professional, public affairs, conservation, and study groups, as well as schools and the general public.

Since 2001, the migratory bird research program and continuing outside professional associations by the co-applicant have produced an impressive number of publications in journals and magazines (23), and presentations at professional meetings (17). They are testimony to the professional and public interest in Pantex's work with migratory birds and to the value of the data being generated.